

Claims

1. A system in a vehicle for accessing information about the vehicle comprising:

5 a display element for displaying a plurality of options and a plurality of items representing different aspects of the vehicle, each option corresponding to a respective one of the plurality of items;

10 an interface for selecting at least one of the plurality of options;

a mechanism for indicating an association of the selected option with the item corresponding thereto; and

15 an output for providing information concerning the aspect of the vehicle represented by the item corresponding to the selected option.

2. The system of claim 1 wherein the association is indicated by highlighting the selected option and the item corresponding thereto in an identical color.

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3. The system of claim 1 wherein the association is indicated by including an indicator in both the selected option and the item corresponding thereto.

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4. The system of claim 3 wherein the indicator

includes a numeral.

5. The system of claim 1 wherein said display element comprises a liquid crystal display (LCD).

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6. The system of claim 1 wherein said interface includes a touch-screen capability.

7. The system of claim 1 wherein said interface 10 includes a circuit for processing a voice input to effect a selection of the at least one of the plurality of options.

8. The system of claim 1 wherein the interface is receptive to a signal transmitted by an indicator device, 15 and the interface selects the at least one option in response to the signal.

9. The system of claim 8 wherein the indicator device includes a mouse device.

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10. A system in a vehicle for accessing information about the vehicle comprising:

25 a display element for displaying a plurality of options, each option corresponding to a different aspect of the vehicle;

an interface for activating at least one of the plurality of options; and

an output for providing information concerning an aspect of the vehicle corresponding to the activated option,  
5 the activated option being distinguished from unactivated options displayed on the display element.

11. The system of claim 10 wherein the activated option is highlighted in a different color than the  
10 unactivated options.

12. A system for use in a vehicle comprising:  
a mechanism for determining whether the vehicle needs a selected service;  
15 a processor for identifying a provider providing the selected service based on a current location of the vehicle relative to a location of the provider when it is determined that the selected service is needed; and  
an interface for supplying information concerning at  
20 least the location of the provider.

13. The system of claim 12 further comprising a navigator for providing directions, wherein the information is supplied to the navigator, and the navigator provides  
25 directions to reach the location of the provider based on

the information.

14. The system of claim 13 wherein the information is in accordance with a global positioning system (GPS) format.

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15. A system for providing messages of varying importance levels in a vehicle comprising:

a plurality of audio outputs for providing the messages, the audio outputs being disposed in different 10 areas in the vehicle; and

a processor for assigning a plurality of subsets of the audio outputs, each subset of the audio outputs corresponding to a respective one of the importance levels of the messages, a message is provided by a subset of the 15 audio outputs corresponding to an importance level of the message.

16. The system of claim 15 wherein each of the plurality of audio outputs includes a speaker.

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17. The system of claim 15 wherein at least one of the plurality of audio outputs is disposed opposite a seat in the vehicle such that the at least one audio output provides selected messages toward a front part of a person occupying 25 the seat.

18. A method for use in a system for accessing information about a vehicle comprising the steps of:

displaying a plurality of options and a plurality of items representing different aspects of the vehicle, each 5 option corresponding to a respective one of the plurality of items;

selecting at least one of the plurality of options;

indicating an association of the selected option with the item corresponding thereto; and

10 providing information concerning the aspect of the vehicle represented by the item corresponding to the selected option.

19. The method of claim 18 wherein the association is 15 indicated by highlighting the selected option and the item corresponding thereto in an identical color.

20. The method of claim 18 wherein the association is indicated by including an indicator in both the selected 20 option and the item corresponding thereto.

21. The method of claim 20 wherein the indicator includes a numeral.

25 22. The method of claim 18 further comprising the step

of receiving a signal, wherein the at least one option being selected in response to the signal.

23. A method for use in a system for accessing information about a vehicle comprising the steps of:

- displaying a plurality of options, each option corresponding to a different aspect of the vehicle;
- activating at least one of the plurality of options;
- and

providing information concerning an aspect of the vehicle corresponding to the activated option, the activated option being distinguished from unactivated options displayed on the display element.

24. The method of claim 23 wherein the activated option is highlighted in a different color than the unactivated options.

25. A method for use in a system in a vehicle comprising the steps of:

- determining whether the vehicle needs a selected service;
- identifying a provider providing the selected service based on a current location of the vehicle relative to a location of the provider when it is determined that the

selected service is needed; and

supplying information concerning at least the location of the provider.

5        26. The method of claim 25 further comprising the step of providing directions to reach the location of the provider based on the information.

10       27. The method of claim 25 wherein the information is in accordance with a GPS format.

15       28. A method for use in a system for providing messages of varying importance levels in a vehicle, the system including a plurality of audio outputs for providing the messages, the audio outputs being disposed in different areas in the vehicle, the method comprising the steps of:

20       assigning a plurality of subsets of the audio outputs, each subset of the audio outputs corresponding to a respective one of the importance levels of the messages; and

25       providing a message using a subset of the audio outputs corresponding to an importance level of the message.

25       29. A system in a vehicle for accessing first information about a given aspect of said vehicle comprising: a display element for displaying a plurality of

options, each option being associated with a respective one of a plurality of aspects of said vehicle;

an interface for selecting one of said options, the selected option being associated with said given aspect and  
5 in a first status; and

an output for providing second information about said selected option, said selected option being activated to access said first information, the activated option being in a second status.

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30. The system of claim 29 wherein said vehicle comprises an automobile.

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31. The system of claim 29 wherein said display element comprises an LCD.

32. The system of claim 29 wherein said interface includes a touch-screen capability.

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33. The system of claim 29 wherein said first status is indicated by a highlight on said selected option in a first color.

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34. The system of claim 33 wherein said second status is indicated by a highlight on the activated option in a

second color.

35. The system of claim 29 wherein said output includes audio element for conveying said first information  
5 verbally.

36. A method for use in a system in a vehicle for accessing first information about a given aspect of said vehicle comprising the steps of:

10 displaying a plurality of options, each option being associated with a respective one of a plurality of aspects of said vehicle;

15 selecting one of said options, the selected option being associated with said given aspect and in a first status; and

providing second information about said selected option, said selected option being activated to access said first information, the activated option being in a second status.

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37. The method of claim 36 wherein the particular one of said options is selected using a touch-screen technique.

25 38. The method of claim 36 wherein said first status is indicated by a highlight on said selected option in a

first color.

39. The method of claim 38 wherein said second status is indicated by a highlight on the activated option in a 5 second color.

40. The method of claim 36 further comprising the step of conveying said first information verbally.

10 41. A system for use in a vehicle comprising:  
a control element for issuing a plurality of options,  
each option being associated with a respective one of a  
plurality of aspects of the vehicle;  
a first interface for selecting at least one of said  
15 options;

an output for providing information about the aspect of  
the vehicle associated with the selected option; and  
a second interface for activating the selected option.

20 42. The system of claim 41 wherein the first interface  
is the same as the second interface.

25 43. The system of claim 41 wherein at least one of the  
first and second interfaces includes a display element  
having a touch-screen capability.

44. The system of claim 41 wherein the selected option is activated to control the aspect of the vehicle associated with the selected option.

5 45. The system of claim 41 wherein the selected option is activated to provide second information about the aspect of the vehicle associated with the selected option.

10 46. The system of claim 41 wherein the information is verbally provided.

47. The system of claim 41 wherein the information is visually provided.

15 48. The system of claim 41 wherein the selected option being in a first status, and the activated option being in a second status.

20 49. The system of claim 48 wherein at least one of the first and second statuses is indicated by a pre-selected audio signal.

25 50. The system of claim 48 wherein said first status is indicated by a first color, and said second status is indicated by a second color.

51. The system of claim 41 wherein said vehicle is an automobile.

52. The system of claim 41 wherein the plurality of options are issued in response to an entry of data to the system.

53. The system of claim 41 wherein the plurality of aspects of the vehicle include different functions provided by the vehicle.

54. The system of claim 53 wherein the different functions relate to climate control of the vehicle.

55. The system of claim 41 wherein said output is capable of providing special information.

56. The system of claim 55 wherein said special information when provided is preceded by a selected audio signal.

57. The system of claim 55 wherein the special information concerns the current condition of the vehicle.

58. The system of claim 41 further comprising a

navigator processor for providing navigational information.

59. The system of claim 58 wherein the navigational information is provided based on GPS data.

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60. A method for use in a system in a vehicle comprising the steps of:

issuing a plurality of options, each option being associated with a respective one of a plurality of aspects  
10 of the vehicle;

selecting at least one of said options;  
providing information about the aspect of the vehicle associated with the selected option; and  
activating the selected option.

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61. The method of claim 60 wherein the selected option is activated to control the aspect of the vehicle associated with the selected option.

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62. The method of claim 60 wherein the selected option is activated to provide second information about the aspect of the vehicle associated with the selected option.

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63. The method of claim 60 wherein the information is verbally provided.

64. The method of claim 60 wherein the information is visually provided.

65. The method of claim 60 wherein the selected option 5 being in a first status, and the activated option being in a second status.

66. The method of claim 65 wherein at least one of the first and second statuses is indicated by a pre-elected 10 audio signal.

67. The method of claim 65 wherein said first status is indicated by a first color, and said second status is indicated by a second color.

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68. The method of claim 60 wherein said vehicle is an automobile.

69. The method of claim 60 wherein the plurality of 20 options are issued in response to an entry of data to the system.

70. The method of claim 60 wherein the plurality of 25 aspects of the vehicle include different functions provided by the vehicle.

71. The method of claim 70 wherein the different functions relate to climate control of the vehicle.

72. The method of claim 60 further comprising the step  
5 of providing special information.

73. The method of claim 72 wherein said special information when provided is preceded by a selected audio signal.

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74. The method of claim 72 wherein the special information concerns the current condition of the vehicle.

75. The method of claim 60 further comprising the step  
15 of providing navigational information.

76. The method of claim 75 wherein the navigational information is provided based on GPS data.

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77. A system for use in a vehicle comprising:  
an output for issuing at least one option, the option including data on an aspect of the vehicle; and  
an interface for showing said aspect of the vehicle,  
the option also including an indicator associating said  
25 option with the aspect of the vehicle shown.

78. The system of claim 77 wherein the indicator includes a numeral.

79. The system of claim 77 wherein said interface 5 includes a display element.

80. The system of claim 79 wherein said interface includes an LCD.

10 81. The system of claim 77 further comprising an input for activating the option.

82. The system of claim 81 wherein an activation of the option is indicated by a selected audio signal.

15 83. The system of claim 81 wherein the option is activated to control the aspect of the vehicle.

84. The system of claim 81 wherein the option is activated to provide information about the aspect of the 20 vehicle.

85. The system of claim 84 wherein the information is verbally provided.

86. The system of claim 84 wherein the information is visually provided.

87. The system of claim 77 wherein the data is 5 verbally provided.

88. The system of claim 77 wherein the data is visually provided.

10 89. The system of claim 77 wherein said vehicle is an automobile.

90. The system of claim 77 wherein the option is issued in response to an entry of information to the system.

15 91. The system of claim 77 wherein the aspect of the vehicle includes a function provided by the vehicle.

92. The system of claim 91 wherein said function 20 relates to climate control of the vehicle.

93. The system of claim 77 further comprising a provider for providing special information.

25 94. The system of claim 93 wherein said special

information when provided is preceded by a selected audio signal.

95. The system of claim 93 wherein the special  
5 information concerns the current condition of the vehicle.

96. The system of claim 77 further comprising a navigator processor for providing navigational information.

10 97. The system of claim 96 wherein the navigational information is provided based on GPS data.

98. A method for use in a system in a vehicle comprising the steps of:

15 issuing at least one option, the option including data on an aspect of the vehicle; and  
showing said aspect of the vehicle, the option also including an indicator associating said option with the aspect of the vehicle shown.

20 99. The method of claim 98 wherein said indicator includes a numeral.

100. The method of claim 98 further comprising the  
25 step of activating the option.

101. The method of claim 98 wherein an activation of the option is indicated by a selected audio signal.

102. The method of claim 98 wherein the option is  
5 activated to control the aspect of the vehicle.

103. The method of claim 98 wherein the option is activated to provide information about the aspect of the vehicle.

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104. The method of claim 103 wherein the information is verbally provided.

105. The method of claim 103 wherein the information  
15 is visually provided.

106. The method of claim 98 wherein the data is verbally provided.

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107. The method of claim 98 wherein the data is visually provided.

108. The method of claim 98 wherein said vehicle is an automobile.

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109. The method of claim 98 wherein the option is issued in response to an entry of information to the system.

110. The method of claim 98 wherein the aspect of the  
5 vehicle includes a function provided by the vehicle.

111. The method of claim 110 wherein said function relates to climate control of the vehicle.

10 112. The method of claim 98 further comprising the step of providing special information.

113. The method of claim 112 wherein said special information when provided is preceded by a selected audio  
15 signal.

114. The method of claim 112 wherein the special information concerns the current condition of the vehicle.

20 115. The method of claim 98 further comprising the step of providing navigational information.

116. The method of claim 115 wherein the navigational information is provided based on GPS data.

117. A method for storing a preferred setting of at least one function in a vehicle comprising the steps of:  
operating said at least one function based on the preferred setting;

5 determining whether the current setting in which said at least one function is operated has been changed from the preferred setting; and

10 issuing an option to store the current setting when the current setting is determined to have been changed from the preferred setting, the stored current setting becoming the preferred setting.

118. The method of claim 117 wherein said option is a displayed option.

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119. A method for adjusting climate control in a vehicle comprising the steps of:

determining a location of the vehicle;  
identifying a climate condition as a function of at least the location; and  
adjusting the climate control to meet the predetermined climate condition.

25 120. The method of claim 119 wherein the climate condition is identified also as a function time.

121. Apparatus for detecting a removal of an object comprising:

a locator for providing information representing a location of said object;

5 a processor in said object responsive to said information for determining whether the object has been moved from a predetermined location; and

an output for generating an alert when the processor determines that the object has been moved.

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122. The apparatus of claim 121 wherein said alert includes information representing a second location to which the object has been moved.

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123. The apparatus of claim 121 wherein said output includes a transmitter for emitting a predetermined signal to a selected entity, which is receptive to said predetermined signal.

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124. The apparatus of claim 123 wherein said selected entity is selected based on a location of said selected entity with respect to a second location to which the object has been moved.

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125. The apparatus of claim 121 wherein said object is

a vehicle.

126. A method for providing information concerning  
maintenance of an engine in a vehicle comprising the steps  
5 of:

measuring a rate at which the engine runs;  
detecting whether the rate of the engine exceeds a  
predetermined rate;  
recording a period during which the rate of the engine  
10 is detected exceeding the predetermined rate;  
adding said period to a cumulative period; and  
emitting an alert when said cumulative period exceeds a  
predetermined period.

15 127. The method of claim 126 wherein the rate is a  
function of an RPM value.

128. The method of claim 127 wherein the vehicle is an  
automobile.